

Testimony to the 61st Legislature
In Support of In-Home Family Preservation Services
Child & Family Services Division
February 4, 2009

I am here to urge support of the Child & Family Services budget.

One of the services we offer, Family Based Services (FBS), is funded primarily through the "in-home services" portion of the Child & Family Services budget.

Here are the facts & figures:

- Family preservation services are effective. 80% of intervention that go to completion are successful.¹
- The results of family preservation services are:
 - Families become healthier as measured by their ability to support each other emotionally, provide for the physical and developmental needs of their children, manage child behavior, and function more independently.
 - Children are more often able to return to or remain in their own families.
 - When children must remain in care they are more often able to receive love and nurture from a family rather than have to go into group or residential care.
- The Department saves money.
 - The cost to the Department for our Family Based Services in FY '08 was \$133,791 (a mix of federal and state dollars), and averaged of \$1,672 per child served.
 - For foster care or higher level of care for those same children the Department would have conservatively spent over \$320,000.² This yields a net savings of \$186,209.
 - Providing Family Based Services ensures the State's receipt of family preservation funds. It meets Federal Adoption and Safe Family Act requirements to make "best efforts" to prevent placement or move children more quickly to permanent alternative placements.
- What should be done?
 - Fully fund Child & Family Services – they and the children that depend on them have been starved for adequate funding for far too long.
 - Increase funding for in-home services. Programs like FBS at Friends To Youth are at the limits of sustainability due to rates that are far below cost and over dependence on federal IV-a funding that is far from certain to be there in the coming biennium.
- Services Offered by Friends to Youth
 - In FY 2008 Friends to Youth served 80 youth in 46 families.
 - Masters level individual, family, couple and milieu therapy in-the-home.
 - In-home family assessments to support timely permanency planning for children.
 - Skills training in effective parenting, family communication, and child behavior management are brought to the home where the skills can be immediately practiced and reinforced to achieve better outcomes.
 - Concrete help is given to find needed resources for everything from beds to childcare.

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¹ For Friends to Youth, a family based services program in the Missoula area the effectiveness rates for FY 2000 through FY 2008, the yearly rates were 80%, 80%, 79%, 86%, 70%, 75%, 86%, 77%, and 86%. The average therefore is 79.9%

² This figure is based on the average cost of the level of care each child would have gone to without the intervention. In some instances our intervention with families prevented any placement. In some instances it helped children return home sooner. And when we intervened with foster, kinship, or adoptive families the savings was based on the predicted level of care that the child(ren) would have graduated to if we had not intervened.

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